

To W. O. from Dr. Flick.

Philadelphia,
March 19, 1904.

My dear Dr. Osler:

I fully agree with you that there ought not to be a third Congress but I cannot see how the organization of a third Congress is the only way out of the difficulty. What is to prevent us from getting up a United States Society for the Prevention of Tuberculosis, with officers and an executive committee with power to appoint representation on the International Committee on Tuberculosis and to prepare the way for an International Congress on tuberculosis in 1906 or 1907. In my judgment it would not be possible to get up a proper Congress on Tuberculosis earlier than 1906 anyway. From what I have been able to learn of Lewis' organization it will do more harm than good if it meets, and it will be a discredit to our country. If it meets without the support of the decent element of the medical profession the injury will not be nearly so great as it will be if we join with them. Moreover, to espouse the cause of Lewis means to espouse the enmity of all the men who have stood and are standing with the latter. Lewis has invited delegates from small country societies who know absolutely nothing about tuberculosis and who if they ever come together will, through their ignorance and preconceived notions, speaking officially as they will, give us a setback in our work which will take years to overcome. We have at present in this country a large enough number of advanced thinkers on the subject of tuberculosis to get up a decent organization, an organization which will speak with authority and will also speak along the right lines. An organization made up of such men, if it will stand aloof from both Lewis and Bell, not only will counteract all the injury they may do but will do a great deal of good.

We will have at the meeting on the 28th enough representative men from all over the United States to organize ourselves into a representative United States Society and the nucleus thus established, if properly organized, can in a very short time gather round itself every worker in tuberculosis in this country. I do not wish to be stubborn but I cannot bring myself to join forces with men who are actuated by improper motives and who are willing to make subservient to their own aggrandizement any good cause that may come along.

Cordially yours,

Lawrence F. Flick.